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# LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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## **I've Got Mail** by Senator Larry Craig

When the Continental Congress signed our Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, Great Britain didn't find out until August 10<sup>th</sup>. The residents of Moscow, Idaho didn't find out about President Garfield's assassination until two weeks after it happened. The ease of information exchange has certainly improved since our great nation was born.

Our Founders envisioned a representative republic where Members of Congress and a President were freely elected and sent to Washington to govern – often spending months at a time away from their homes. Constituents had the opportunity to write letters, and perhaps visit with their representatives when they were home. It was difficult for voters to get their opinions to their elected representatives – and hard for the elected representatives to respond.

My, how times have changed. Idahoans can call me in Washington, D.C. or any of my six offices around Idaho, send me a fax, e-mail me a message through my website, come to a town hall meeting, e-mail a question for my monthly podchat, call in during a radio appearance, or even just stop me in line at the grocery store or TJ Maxx. After all, I return to Idaho nearly every weekend in addition to Congressional recesses.

Thankfully, Idahoans aren't shy about letting me know what they think, how they feel, or what I should do. So far this year I have received over 80,000 letters, postcards, e-mails, and phone calls from Idahoans – already well above the 50,000 I received all of last year. I try to respond thoughtfully to each and every one. To put this in perspective, just 88,000 people lived in Idaho when it became a state in 1890.

This August I am spending four weeks in Idaho. During that time I will hold 12 town hall meetings, including Gooding, Montpelier, Soda Springs, Malad, Bonners Ferry, Sandpoint, Kellogg, Coeur d'Alene, St. Maries, Moscow, Orofino, and Grangeville. Details for each meeting are at <http://craig.senate.gov/schedule>. Can't attend one of the town meetings? Ask a question through my website for my monthly podchat and listen to it for free through my website – the podchat is essentially a virtual town hall meeting.

Do you want to stay up on the latest items of interest to Idaho in the U.S. Senate? Subscribe to my bi-weekly eNEWS or watch my Washington Report on my website or your iPod.

I doubt our founding fathers could even have begun to imagine how closely Congress interacts with the voters these days – but I am certain they would be excited to see it. It serves to enhance our government.

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What might shock them, however, is how many Americans don’t take advantage of the opportunities they have to shape and participate in their government. That would doubtless also come as a surprise to the tens of thousands of our fellow citizens who paid the ultimate price to protect the freedoms we enjoy. And it is probably unimaginable to those living under oppressive regimes today throughout the world, where even high-tech communications capabilities like the Internet can’t be accessed without a government-imposed filter.

So, the next time you send an e-mail to your member of Congress, the next time you vote, or the next time you attend a town meeting and ask your representative firsthand about an issue, you might take a moment to think what a blessing it is to live in a country where you can voice your opinion without fear of retribution or imprisonment.

Two hundred and thirty years ago our Founders told the British Crown exactly what they thought. It took a little longer back then, but I thank God they did and created the beacon of freedom and democracy America is today. Don’t waste their sacrifice – take a moment and let me know what you think.